"Daddy"

A Melodrama

By Jeremy O. Harris

Represented by:
Ross Weiner
ICM Partners
730 Fifth Avenue, 3rd Floor
New York, NY 10019
212-556-5743

SETTING: 90077 (Bel Air, Los Angeles, California.)

TIME: Now.

CHARACTERS:
FRANKLIN- Mid 20s, Black. An artist. Has the slightest hint of a southern accent, becomes subtly pronounced as the play progresses.

ANDRE- 50-60s. White. One of those possibly ethnic Europeans with the unmistakable accent of the incredibly wealthy. A collector who buys art with an explicit worth. .

MAX- Mid 20s. White. Franklin's best friend. Looks great in a swimsuit. An actor who has been cast as a lead in three network pilots that weren't picked up. This is the first time he's been in a play.

BELLAMY- Mid 20s. A Non-Black WOC. Looks better in a swimsuit. She's quite happy with her own directionlessness. She has 9.3k instagram followers.

ZORA - 40-60s. Black. Franklin's mother. Someone who sees the world as it is and not how she wishes it were. A Virginian and a soldier for Christ.

ALESSIA- Any Age. A gallerist who is sharp and direct. Which is rare, I gather.

GOSPEL CHOIR- Franklin's forgotten heart and soul.

NOTES ON STYLE:
Google David Hockney's "Portrait of an Artist (Pool With Two Figures)" 1971, if you've never seen it. Also, I listened to a lot of George Michael, Nicki Minaj, and Shirley Caesar while writing.

The intimacy in the play should feel real in all its forms.

All the action of the play takes place in, around and about Andre's pool.

Everybody talks but no one listens. Have fun with that.

Things said in parentheses are sort of spoken secrets, unconscious truths. A (/) in the text indicates that the next line of dialogue should begin.

Also, although I used visual descriptors of the characters in this play that may lead you to believe I want a cast of "pretty" people, note: THIS PLAY'S CHARACTERS MUST BE "PRETTY", **THE CHARACTERS** NOT YOUR PERCEPTION OF THE ACTORS. THERE IS A DIFFERENCE.

“He live in a palace, bought me Alexander McQueen he was keeping me stylish...I’m high as hell, I only took a half a pill. I’m on some dumb shit.” ***- Nicki Minaj, Anaconda***

"...there’s the bizarre fact that queerness reads, even to some black gay men themselves, as a kind of whiteness. In a black, Christian-informed culture, where relatively few men head households anymore, whiteness is equated with perversity, a pollutant further eroding the already decimated black family." ***- Hilton Als, White Girls***

ACT 1
(FRANKLIN + ANDRE)

SCENE 1

Before us, downstage, there is an expansive infinity pool. Perhaps there are inflatables? Perhaps not. Upstage there are five pool side chaise lounges.

Behind those, a glass wall and a sliding door leading to a stark white room that may or may not have art on the walls. When the door is slid closed you can't hear what's being said behind it.

FRANKLIN stands in the middle of the room looking around. He is dripping wet and wearing only a speedo. He's a bit more than drunk.

ANDRE enters with a towel. He's touching himself, his face, high on molly. The sliding door is open.

ANDRE

How was the pool?

FRANKLIN

Is that a Twombly?

ANDRE

You know him?

FRANKLIN

Obsessed.
Saw his,um,
his retrospective last year.
I got lost in all the swirls.

ANDRE

(Goddamn you're beautiful.)
Was that--
It was molly /you gave me right?

FRANKLIN

Did you know Rauschenberg left his wife for Twombly?
I didn't-
so random...
just,
yeah...
I think it was molly
unless it was K...

(pause)

There was this old white lady
who DID NOT
approve of that fact
being in the audio tour.

ANDRE

(reaching out for his legs)

Has anyone ever told you
you have legs like Naomi?

FRANKLIN

Naomi?

ANDRE

Campbell.
She also did a lap in my pool once.

A moment...

FRANKLIN

Oh.
No.
Nobody's ever said that.
...
(Fuck.
I'm super high.)

ANDRE

May I?

Franklin gestures that he may.
Andre begins to rub his face up and down Franklin's legs.
From his feet to his thighs.

ANDRE
(still rubbing)

(Mmmm....
Smooth.
Like the sweetest chocolate.)

FRANKLIN

...
You know...
The woman,
that white woman from the retrospective,
she kept saying,
"Why?"
Over and over...
"Why?"
Then she was like,
"Why do they INSIST on shoving it down our throats.
The man,
he paints,
I don't give a rat's ass if he was sleeping with Big Foot!
Just tell me about the goddamn paintings.
You know?
It's just--
Everything else?
It's all just gossip.
And I do NOT respond well to gossip.
I don't take it from my children and I don't take it from my friends
and I DO NOT want to be forced to engage with it at a museum exhibition."
Then her little group of rich white lady friends,
definitely members,
maybe donors,
sort of shook their heads in agreement and took off their little earphones.
Then walked away.
...

He begins to laugh.

FRANKLIN

That tickles.

ANDRE
(he continues rubbing)
Do you know a lot about art?

FRANKLIN
A bit...
I'm an artist, or
Whatever...
I actually have a like
just like a little show /
coming up in a--

ANDRE
Amazing.
You know
I have more.
All the best.

Franklin moves a bit away, looking around.

FRANKLIN
I saw the Calder in your living room.
And there was a Lichtenstein in your foyer.

ANDRE
(a come on)
And an O'Keefe in the kitchen.
An Arbus
and two Shermans in my office.

FRANKLIN
...
...
...

ANDRE
(standing up)
But you haven't seen my favorite room yet.

Andre grabs Franklin's arm and stares into his face deeply. It's weird but it has a sort of creepy sensuality to it, European.

FRANKLIN
What's so special about it?

ANDRE
See for yourself.
Go through that door
take an immediate left
then open the first door on the right.

Franklin looks at him for a moment and then walks out of the room. Andre rubs his own face for a few moments and smiles.

There is the sound of someone excitedly running down a hallway before Franklin re-enters.

Franklin has a new light in his eyes.

FRANKLIN
You have a room full of BASQUIATS?

ANDRE
I loaned a few to SF MOMA
but yeah.

FRANKLIN
This is--

Franklin starts to laugh now. Struck by the absurdity of it all.

ANDRE
Little Naomi.
You're so...
Look at you./
Goddamn.

FRANKLIN
Don't you find that a bit gauche?

ANDRE
What?

FRANKLIN

A room full of Basquiats?
Don't get me wrong it's
like,
it's cool,
Like,
Amazing...
or whatever.
But it's
Like, yeah,
you have money but
curatorially
the taste is like,
booty.

ANDRE

Booty?

FRANKLIN

Yeah.
Like,
straight
ass.
The pieces in that room are essentially in conversations with each other.
Which is so boring.
A Basquiat can't be in conversation with itself.
It has to be...
like...
like, Basquiat is such a big personality.
There can only ever really be
like
one of him in a room at a time.
Otherwise the space gets overwhelmed.

ANDRE

Interesting...

FRANKLIN

Also,
don't you think,
like,
well like, owning a Calder
like a big Calder
is also gauche.
Especially
when you have like...
a Sherman in your office
And an Arbus in the bathroom?
(ugh...)

Andre smiles and begins to walk around Franklin taking stock of his body like he's a sculpture ripe for procurement, except this is a statue he can touch when he sees an imperfection, a perfection.

ANDRE

My interior architect
didn't think so.

FRANKLIN

Your interior architect either has bad taste
or wanted their fee to be higher.
Because right now you seem like the kind of dude who has a shit ton of money,
But like,
No guidance,
no education
and no taste.
Like, this screams nouveau riche.
You know?

Franklin looks at Andre and realizes he's drunk.

FRANKLIN

Oh.
Fuck. I'm sorry.
(goddamn it.
goddman it.
goddamn.)

ANDRE

Why are you apologizing?

FRANKLIN

Because I have this
like
habit?
Of like--
I can't shut up
sometimes
I just like
say and say and say and say
everything I've ever thought
like it matters to anyone besides me.

Andre stands face to face with Franklin and looks at him, daring him to flinch.

Franklin looks back and in an instant Andre tongue is taking a deep dive into his slightly agape mouth. Their tongues swim together like synchronized swimmers in an Olympic meet.

ANDRE
(pulling away and grabbing his face)

Be mine.

FRANKLIN

What?

ANDRE

I want you.
You...uh
Ha
You're--
...
...
Tell me what I should I get.

FRANKLIN

What?

ANDRE

If you were me.
What would you buy?
Who should I have on these walls?
...
...
You?
...
...
Tell me
and it's here.
Curate.
You have a show coming up...
Should I populate the walls with your stuff?

FRANKLIN

....
Stop it.

ANDRE

I'm serious.
Should I?

FRANKLIN

No.

ANDRE

Why not?

FRANKLIN

Because...
art...
art loses it's worth
the minute it can be bought?
or like...
yeah...
It becomes worthless
once it's owned.

Andre grabs Franklin's face and pulls it close to his-- nuzzling temple to temple.

They stay there for a long moment Andre looking deeply into Franklin.

ANDRE

Just...
Stay here.
Talk to me tonight.
Say and say and say to me
until you slip up and say something you never thought you'd think.

The opening synth notes to George Michael's 1988 #1 hit single "Father Figure" begin to play.

Franklin looks up, almost aware (in that way the drunk or the high can almost peer into those dimensions that run parallel to their own if only for a moment) that his life is being scored.

FRANKLIN

Um...
...
...
...
...
uh...
...
...
...
Ok?

He reaches out to kiss Andre again just as the first verse is on the verge of beginning.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 2

Franklin lays by the pool with MAX and BELLAMY. He is wearing the same speedo as before, he now has on a pair of brand new CELINE sunglasses.

They are passing a vial of cocaine back and forth throughout as they drink mimosas.

MAX

Where did you meet him?

FRANKLIN

After the Night Gallery show
At that new spot.

MAX

Which one?

FRANKLIN

The really good one.
The one where you have to enter through a kitchen.

MAX

Oh P & A.

FRANKLIN

No the other one.

MAX

Oh yeah FKT.

FRANKLIN

FKT is closed now.

MAX

PFC Pleasure Factory?

FRANKLIN

Yes!
Maybe...?
I don’t remember.
I was super high.

MAX

Fuck.
Why didn’t you invite me?

FRANKLIN

I did.
You said you were busy
with Marcus.

MAX

Fuck Marcus.

BELLAMY

Franklin...
Are those the new Celine's?

MAX

Oh my god they are!

BELLAMY

Shut up!
I want the new Celine's!

FRANKLIN

He got them for me yesterday.

MAX

What the fuck...

FRANKLIN

I know...

MAX

You hit the jackpot.

FRANKLIN

It's not like that.

BELLAMY

Can I try them on?
I love Celine.

MAX

He's a troll isn't he?
Plying you with gifts and shit.

BELLAMY

No judgements...
I'd let a troll fuck me for Celine.

FRANKLIN

(laughing)

No.
He's like super hot.

MAX

How hot?

FRANKLIN

I don't know...
Why does / it matter?

MAX

Troll

BELLAMY
(laughing)

Totally.

FRANKLIN

No.
He's hot.
You just....
It's like...
it's like,
my whole world shifts when he looks at me.
And like
everything I could ever conceive
is the epitome of conception.

There's a moment...Franklin feeling Andre's eyes.

BELLAMY

Oh my god, that's beautiful.

MAX

That sounds disgusting.
What does he do?

FRANKLIN

What?
I don't know.
He just sort of has money.

MAX

Well,
that's the hottest thing you've said so far.

BELLAMY
Can I please try on the Celine's?

Franklin hands them over. She holds them as though she's been bestowed a tiara and slowly puts them on.

FRANKLIN
He owns a couple galleries in Thailand.
He says the market is crazy there.
Australians on vacay blow stacks
on artists they've never even heard of.

MAX
Australia is just a continent of rich idiots.

BELLAMY
I love it.
Australia can get it any time.

FRANKLIN
He actually--
well he implied that if I wanted to
like run the Thai gallery it was mine.
So I...
I mean...
(Obviously that's CRAZY.
But I'm thinking about it.)
After my show
I think I'm going to like,
seriously consider something like that.

Franklin finishes his mimosa. Immediately embarrassed about exposing that

FRANKLIN
Um...
I'm gonna get another one.
You guys good?

MAX
I'll take another.

BELLAMY

I'm good...

Franklin exits. Bellamy is taking selfies with her iPhone.

BELLAMY

Don't I look AMAZING in these?
Celine DEFINITELY suits my skin tone.

MAX

Bellamy, this is fucking insane.
How the hell did Franklin
get a goddamn sugar daddy?

BELLAMY

I don't even need to retouch this one.
They look that good.

MAX

I mean.
Nobody short of Zac Efron pulls this kind of sugar.

BELLAMY

Do you think he'd let me keep these?
You know since he didn't really pay for them?

MAX

I have to meet this guy.
He's probably a total troll.

BELLAMY

I'm serious.

Franklin re enters setting a glass beside Max. Franklin's phone begins to ring on the chaise.

FRANKLIN
(looking at his phone)

Guys feel free to stay over.
Andre told me if I felt lonely I could have friends.
(pause)

He ignores the call.

MAX
(looking over to Bellamy)
So crazy he just left you here.../
When does he get back?

FRANKLIN
Well we've been dating for a bit.
It's not that crazy.

BELLAMY
Franklin?

Bellamy beams at Franklin expectantly.

FRANKLIN
No, Bellamy.
You can't have them.

BELLAMY
But...

FRANKLIN
I'll get you a pair next week
when he's back.

BELLAMY
Shut up.

FRANKLIN
I will.

BELLAMY
SHUT
UP!
OHMYGOD!
(hugging him deeply)
You're the best.

MAX
Don't you think you're moving too fast?

Franklin leaves the hug and looks back at Max.

His phone begins to ring again.

FRANKLIN
What?

MAX
I mean...
dude.
You like,
you move in practically
a SECOND
after meeting this guy.
You're like

He sees who it is. Fuck.

FRANKLIN
No.
It's not like that--
It's-

MAX
You haven't mentioned
your show like, once
like what are you even
like what are you working on?
You know?

FRANKLIN
Um...
a lot. I think.
I've figured out.--
(holding up his phone)
This is actually Alessia now...
Hold on.

Franklin gets up and answers the phone. He walks over to the sliding door and closes it shut. Behind the glass all we see are his lips moving.

During this conversation Max looks back incredulous, attempting to hear what little he can. Bellamy looks at her phone beaming.

BELLAMY
I'm literally blowing up right now.
(reading a comment)
"You're gorgeous. Die."
Oh my god everyone is obsessed.

MAX
Shhh.
Why do you even care?

BELLAMY
Why shouldn't I?

Bellamy goes back to her phone, responding as Max stands up.

Franklin walks back out right as Max gets up and jumps in the pool.

Max looks up at Franklin as he sets his phone down.

MAX
Is he the top or the bottom?

FRANKLIN
What?

MAX
Who's fucking who?

FRANKLIN
Why does it matter?

MAX
I don't know
I'm
I'm just like
curious,
or whatever.

FRANKLIN

Max that's so fucking stupid.

MAX

Ok
then tell me.
...
Who's the top?

Franklin looks at Max for a second before smiling, understanding.

FRANKLIN
(taking off his speedo)

It depends on the night.

He stands there for a moment, still feeling Andre's eyes on him. He throws his speedo onto the chaise lounge beside Bellamy and dives into the pool.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 3

In darkness, water in the pool flies about in a torrent. There is the potential of a pool side tsunami and the sounds of subsiding sex fill the air.

As the lights rise Andre pushes off from Franklin and backstrokes downstage to the edge of the pool. Franklin with his arms on the side of the pool downstage, his back to the audience, sits panting for a moment.

ANDRE

You ok?

Franklin, slightly shaking (his body navigating the space between pain and pleasure), pulls himself from the pool. He walks, naked, to the chaise and lies down. Andre stares.

FRANKLIN

I'm good.
I'm just...
Yeah.
That was...
Yeah.

There's a moment--just the sound of the water, breathing.

ANDRE

...
sometimes looking at you is like a gift.

FRANKLIN

...Thanks?

Andre swims back toward the upstage edge of the pool.

ANDRE

You ok?

FRANKLIN

Why do you keep asking that?

ANDRE

You just seemed like you weren't as deeply involved as I was.

He throws water onto his face.

FRANKLIN

I was.
No.
I--
I just.

(pause)

I haven't done that before.

ANDRE

In a pool?
Isn't it the best?
The smoothness.

It's clean.
Like,
Like skating on new ice.
At least for me,
That's always been my feeling.
Like there's no end to your body
No beginning to mine.
Vice versa.

FRANKLIN

Do you think we
like
are moving too fast?
Or something?
Like.
You don't even
know,
like,
anything
about me.
My show is in
a month and you
...
I don't know.
You haven't asked me anything about it.

ANDRE

I'm sorry.
Is that--
Are you ok?

FRANKLIN

No!
Yes?
Fuck...
ugh
Like,
ok,
I haven't like,
well,
like I haven't like,
been fucked.

Before.
so....

This drops like bricks sinking to the bottom of the pool before Andre can react.

FRANKLIN

It was great.
I just.
I just haven't done that.
Yet.
I hadn't, done that.
Um,
Yet.
And I don't even,
like
tell dudes
that I haven't
like,
done that.
Because that can be used
as like
this like
measuring stick?
For your queerness?
Like, if bottoming is hard for you
or you haven't done it
you're like an inferior queer person.
And I don't know...
I just.
ugh.

More silence. Andre gets out of the pool.

ANDRE

You ok?

FRANKLIN

I just said--

(he laughs)

Yeah!
I'm.
Yeah.
I just need some time.

ANDRE

...
...
...
...
...
...
But you enjoyed yourself.
...
...right?
...

Andre stares down at Franklin and begins to speak softly, assertively. It's sexy.

ANDRE

Do you like me being your teacher?
Do you-
Did you,
Did you like that?

Franklin looks at Andre standing over him.

FRANKLIN

Yeah...

ANDRE

You did?
You liked that Naomi?

Andre reaches down and begins caressing Franklin's body.

FRANKLIN
(feeling it)

Yes.
Yes I did.
I do.

ANDRE
(moving his hands quicker now)

Do you want me to teach you more?

Franklin looks up.

FRANKLIN
Like what?

ANDRE
Like more...

FRANKLIN
I--

Before Franklin can respond Andre smacks his bare bottom.

ANDRE
Do you want me to teach you more?

Franklin lets out a laugh. He slaps him again.

FRANKLIN
(laughing)
I--

Andre slaps him again.

ANDRE
No more “I”.
Just “yes, sir”.
“No, sir”.

FRANKLIN
Yes, sir.

ANDRE
You want me to teach you more?

He slaps him again. Franklin lets the pain run up and down his spine. He bites his lip and smiles:

FRANKLIN
Yes sir.

Andre slaps him again, harder this time.

ANDRE
Good.
Turn around.

FRANKLIN
I--

Andre slaps him again harder.

ANDRE
What did I say, Naomi?

FRANKLIN
Yes, sir.

Franklin turns over.

Andre looks down at him. He surveys his naked body and a smile starts to cross his face.

He traces his hand over Franklin's chest. Getting close to his crotch but never touching it.

ANDRE
You like this?

FRANKLIN
Yes sir.

He touches more, his hands moving closer to his crotch.

ANDRE
You want me to touch you there?

FRANKLIN
No, sir.

ANDRE
(surprised)
You don't?

FRANKLIN
No, daddy.

Andre moves his hand abruptly.

ANDRE
What?

FRANKLIN
What?

ANDRE
What did you just say?

Franklin looks up, surprised.

FRANKLIN
No, Sir.

ANDRE
What?

FRANKLIN
I said, “No, sir”

ANDRE
No you didn’t.
You said,
“no daddy”.

Franklin looks around.

FRANKLIN
What?

Another moment.

ANDRE
Do you want me to be your daddy?

A perverse pleasure begins moving through the air.

FRANKLIN
No, sir.

ANDRE
Call me daddy.

FRANKLIN
No sir.

Andre flips Franklin back onto his stomach. He hits him four times hard on his backside.

ANDRE
Call me daddy.

FRANKLIN
No, sir.

Andre hits him again.

FRANKLIN
Ow, daddy.

ANDRE
What did you say?

FRANKLIN
(looking up at him)
Ow, daddy.
...
No more.

Andre reaches down and grabs Franklin's face and licks it.

ANDRE
Say it again:
"Daddy."

FRANKLIN
Daddy.

Andre steps back and looks at him.

ANDRE
Don't move.
Stay right there.
Let me look at you.

He does.

As Franklin inhales and exhales Andre watches and absorbs every facet of him as though his body is a meal and his eyes are his mouth.

ANDRE

Ok.
...
...
Now,
tell daddy what you want him to do.

Pause.

Once again, Franklin's relationship to his space fractures momentarily. You get the sense, for a moment, that maybe he's peering just beyond his present world into ours.

Then he's back and looking up at Andre.

FRANKLIN

I want daddy...
I want daddy to, to put his thumb in my mouth.
(he does)
And I want daddy
I want daddy to ask me about my show.

ANDRE
(smiling)

You do?

Andre's thumb traces Franklin's lips falling in and out of his mouth.

ANDRE

Tell me about your show, baby.

FRANKLIN
(sucking on Andre's thumb)

My show...

Well
my show is at Keller Space
it's--
It's a solo show...
And it's a continuation
of my series
of soft sculptures.
The curator there, Alessia,
she
she really likes them...
they
are like these weird dolls
of black boys.
Possibly me,
all deformed,
and,
like
reminiscent of Xavier Roberts' Cabbage Patch Kids
or more precisely
Martha Nelson Thomas'
"Original Doll Babies".
And...
The show evokes a sense of
nostalgia?
While also
like...
well....
(according to the press release)
recontextualizing what it means to be a black man.

Andre pulls his thumb out of Franklin's mouth then rubs his head, paternal.

A moment. He puts his thumb back in.

ANDRE

That...
yeah...
(pause)
it sounds lovely Franklin.

FRANKLIN

There's a lot more to it than that too...
It's like/ going to

ANDRE

Let me be surprised.

FRANKLIN

Ok.
...

ANDRE

It really does sound lovely, Franklin.

FRANKLIN

You think so?

ANDRE

I know so.

Pause.

FRANKLIN

Are you proud of me?

ANDRE

Of course.

FRANKLIN

Of course what?

ANDRE

What?

FRANKLIN

Call me Franklin.

ANDRE

...Of course I'm proud of you Franklin.

FRANKLIN

...
...
...I love you.

ANDRE

I love you, Franklin.

Franklin takes Andre's thumb out of his mouth turns onto his back, curls up and giggles. Like Micheal Jackson or a child.

He looks up at Andre, earnest.

FRANKLIN

Really daddy?

END OF SCENE

SCENE 4

In darkness we hear the sound of a ringtone. The phone rings and rings in its sorrowful way. Until there is a

BEEP!

FRANKLIN

Hi, you've reached Franklin.
Sorry I uh,
I can't get to the phone right now.
But if you need anything just leave a message
Or, like, send me an email
or a text
and I'll get back to you at my earliest convenience.
Um...
Thank you.

Beep!

Lights up on ZORA, Franklin's mother. She stands smiling and lovely in the middle of the pool. There is a gospel choir behind her.

Like Shirley Caesar, she speaks and the choir follows behind her, singing.

ZORA

Dear son...

GOSPEL CHOIR
(singing)

Dear son...
I missed you today.

ZORA

I wanted to tell you

GOSPEL CHOIR

Wanted to tell you
it will be OK.
The lord has promised that
today is your day.

ZORA

So don't YOU worry.

GOSPEL CHOIR

Don't you worry
He's already made a way.

ZORA

Your mama loves you.

GOSPEL CHOIR

Your mama loves you
But don't forget to call…
Tomorrow's not promised
OK…I guess that's all.

ZORA

Oh and I didn't tell you
but I read about your show.

GOSPEL CHOIR

I didn't tell you
I read bout your show

ZORA
And Lord put it on my heart

GOSPEL CHOIR
The Lord told me,
Zora let's go!

ZORA
So call me soon.

GOSPEL CHOIR
Call me,
and Tell me where I should stay.
Lord knows I ain't got time
for no, AIR B AND BAYYYYY.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 5

Franklin sits beside the pool sewing miniature outfits as Max and Bellamy share sushi take-out. Bellamy is wearing her own Celine's now but also has a very chic bracelet from Tiffany's. Max is wearing a speedo. Franklin, wearing his earphones, is completely immersed in his music.

Behind the sliding glass door we see members of the Gospel Choir moving in work tables and materials for doll construction.

BELLAMY
(to Max)
Literally
It was crazy,
he just like walked over
pulled up a chair
and said,
"Here's the deal.
I don't like games
and I don't like flakes.
I'm a straight shooter
and like,
blah blah blah blah blah".

And he wasn't even hot, you know?
But he was sexy.
It was like, he had this sort of way about him
that was just, like
sexy...
And the weirdest thing was
he was dressed kind of shlubby?
Like
It was one of those things
where like I thought,
"I DEFINITELY need to take him to Barney's ASAP",
but then he picked up the menu and
he was wearing a Muller.
Just casually.
Like Vince tee shirt,
Uniqulo sweatpants
but then like
a fucking Muller
teasing me from his wrist.
It was insane.

She tosses more sushi back.

BELLAMY
Oh my god this is so good.

(raising her voice)
THANK YOU FRANKLIN!

He doesn't hear her.

MAX
(Bored)
Ok...
but get to the good part
when did he like
take you shopping?

BELLAMY
That's kind of the coolest thing,
he didn't.

MAX
What?

BELLAMY

He didn't.
It was like he knew me
after just a few conversations
on the site.
After he like,
said his whole thing.
Told me his rules or whatever
or like
"what he was looking for in a relationship"
he was like,
"oh
I have a gift for you"
and i was all like,
"wahhhhhhhhhh?"
and he was like, "duh."
And then he pulled this fucking Tiffany's bag out
and he gave me this
and like---

She gets emotional.

BELLAMY

I honestly felt like,
this is,
you know,
like
the first time that someone,
anyone really has
like seen me?
As like
worthy?
Or something.

(A moment. She admires her wrist.)

I don't know.
This feels like the real thing.
I'm so happy I did it.

Max looks at her in disbelief.

MAX

Bellamy?
No.
No no no / no no --

BELLAMY
What?

Max throws a chopstick at Franklin.

MAX
This is too much,
from both of you.
Too much!

Franklin looks up from his sewing annoyed.

FRANKLIN
What the fuck, guys?
I told you to give me thirty minutes to finish / these outfits.

MAX
I was trying to tell you
that I think
you and Bellamy
are too much.

FRANKLIN
Why are we too much?

MAX
Bellamy just told me she's in love
with a guy she met on
DaddyFinder.com.
That's too muhc.

BELLAMY
I didn't say
I was / in love.

MAX
And you!
Too much!
(he points to the movers)
You're fucking moving in
with your sugar daddy / after like...

FRANKLIN

Just my studio.
He's not my "sugar daddy"--
the fuck, Max?
I couldn't afford--
and
God!
He offered/
to let me have the...

BELLAMY

Phillip wrote me a letter you guys. /
It's not just some fling...

MAX

Chill out!
I'm joking
...
...
fuck.
Sensitive too.
...
...
...
But.
Y ou could totally have afforded it if you wanted to keep it.

FRANKLIN

No. I couldn't/ have
even if I wanted...

Bellamy pulls out the letter. It is long, front and back for five pages, in tiny, fluid cursive.

BELLAMY

(I've never seen the handwriting
Of any man I've ever dated...)

MAX

Did you call your mom?

FRANKLIN

Why would I call my mom?

MAX
Because your mom could've helped you keep your space.

FRANKLIN
Well
that's not her job.
Ok?
I figured it out without having to involve her.

Franklin picks back up his sewing. Bellamy keeps flipping through the pages of the letter.

BELLAMY
(I can't even read this...
Haha...
Who even writes in cursive anymore)

MAX
So I guess since mom's a no go daddy has to suffice?

Franklin sets down the sewing again.

FRANKLIN
Dude,
what is your problem?
You don't say anything when you're lounging in the pool
or eating sushi on his tab
or any of that...
So I don't get what your like
glitch is right now.
Maybe no one's licking your ass tonight,
maybe you've lost another part?
I don't know,
and I wouldn't
because like
all you've seemed interested in talking about is my fucking life.
...
...
...
Fuck.
Now I have a lot of shit to get done before my show next week
so I'm going to get to it.

If you'd like to have another one of Andre's Xanaxes,
or to take another lap around Andre's pool
Or to order more sushi, ON ANDRE
the pills are over here a
nd towels are over there
and you can grab the ipad sitting in the kitchen .
Otherwise, please leave.
I was enjoying having your bodies here, around me, until you started spouting your shit.

Max just stares at Franklin. Franklin goes back to sewing.

BELLAMY

You guys,
do either of you know how to read cursive?

FRANKLIN

That was just nasty.
A dick thing to say.
Fuck you.

MAX

I'm sorry.
...
(to Bellamy)
Let me see the letter.

Max looks at the letter and tries to read it. It looks foreign.

MAX

...
um...

Franklin looks up.

FRANKLIN

Hand it here
...
...
fuck...

BELLAMY

It's insane.

MAX
I'm actually sorry Franklin.

FRANKLIN
(Franklin passes the letter back to Bellamy)
It doesn't matter.

As they pass the letter back and forth we see that the movers have stopped moving things and that Andre, for an indeterminate amount of time has been watching the proceedings outside. He exits.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 6

Andre and Franklin sit upstage on one of the chaise lounges, deep in conversation. Andre is drinking a negroni, slowly, trying to listen.

The gospel choir is there. They are sitting around the pool watching the action of the scene play out, perhaps commenting with light gestures.

ANDRE
So you don't like her?

FRANKLIN
No.
I love her.
She's--
I LOVE her.
It's just that I do think that I see the work differently than you do.

ANDRE
That's not fair.

FRANKLIN
Yes it is.
It completely is,
it hits me, like
my eyes see with the same angers and fears and joys and frustrations as hers.

ANDRE

And mine can't?
Beauty is beauty is beauty, Franklin.
No matter who's eyes are seeing it.
I saw the show,
all the sugar,
shaped like that?
Built that high?
How could I not--
How could I not cry at the sheer beauty of it?
Of her / immensity? Her--

FRANKLIN

That's my problem with her!
That's what I don't like.
It--
Like...
For you, y'know?
You get to miss her subtlety.
You get to fly by her pain and bathe in her spectacle.
You get to forget the little black boys melting in the summer sun.
The pain of that,
Coupled with
like
that ability
to just see beauty...
as simply beautiful.
That's my problem.

Andre takes a moment and tries to listen. He lights a cigarette.

ANDRE

I think--
I think I can start to see how
well,
no
because...
I guess for me art was always only supposed to be impressive.
Beautiful.
When I got my first piece
my father gave it to me,
it was a Degas.

A study:
two boys in a field
running after a beast
(probably a dog)
that you could barely make out through the scratches.
Sort of a trifle,
but a Degas
and special because of the boy in the foreground.
He was the most fully formed object in the image
a square jaw beneath black hair
and off set eyes.
I couldn't stop staring at him
as my father placed the piece in my hands and
told me to make sure I put it somewhere it could be seen.
...
...
...
So I did.

Franklin gets a text. He looks at his phone.

ANDRE

And I think,
I mean,
especially now since/ you've arrived--...

FRANKLIN

Oh my god...
Fuck.
She loved it.

ANDRE

What?
Oh!
Alessia?
She did!

FRANKLIN

Yes!
I...
She just told me she can't stop thinking about it...

Fuck. Yes.
Oh my god, this is--
but I'm so sorry
since I've gotten here?

ANDRE
(embracing him)

No.
No.
No.
This night is about you now.
You are so fucking special
and it was only a matter of time.

FRANKLIN

No, / shut up.

ANDRE

And...
well,
I didn't want to tell you but
Gregory was impressed too.

FRANKLIN

What?

ANDRE

My friend.
Gregory from Frieze?
He's been wanting to write about my collection for a while now
and when he called I used it as a chance
To tell the world about you.

Franklin looks over and smiles... attempting to hide his discomfort.

FRANKLIN

Oh.
Ok...

ANDRE
Yeah, there's going to be a small feature done on the website then,
he's going to follow me around your show.
Isn't that exciting?

FRANKLIN
Um...
Yeah.

ANDRE
I think it's important.

Franklin gets up and walks to the other side of the room.

FRANKLIN
Totally.

ANDRE
Because it's like I was saying
since you've come into my life
I've...
I want to be supportive of you,
the artist.
I don't want you to ever think,
ever,
that you're anything less to me than
the immensely fascinating man that I think you are.

He embraces Franklin.

ANDRE
Even if you're still my little Naomi
when the lights are off.

Franklin looks up, serious now.

FRANKLIN
Is he putting that in the feature?

ANDRE
What?

Pause.

Franklin attempts to find his words carefully.

FRANKLIN

Is he putting that in the feature?
That I'm
I'm your "Little Naomi"?
I--
...
...
You know that
...
Like
...
Alessia was really into what I showed her.
Like really into it.
But she was like,
"Oh--"
with a really long pause
when I mentioned who owned the house where my new "studio" was located.
"Oh--" with a
like
a really long pause.
Like,
a raised eyebrow.
"Oh--"
...
...
...
And I didn't care because I
I like
I like you, you know?
I think you're dope.
You like...I don't know,
That night you looked at me
that first night
after the club
and it was like
it was like
there was music playing
and

and
you
and me
were standing on the middle of a stage
lights burning down on us
beading our skin with sweat
and the whole world could see us
and they couldn't take their eyes off us
and I was like,
I was into that.
And
then everything started moving really fast
and I was into that too
but...
I don't know.
I don't know that I want the actual whole world
to be staring up at me.
I don't know that I want to like,
be on a stage.
You know?
I don't want to be the guy who gets an
"Oh--"
with a really long pause after every introduction of my boyfriend.
...
...
Are you?
Are you even my boyfriend?

Franklin sits down. He puts his face in between his hands.

FRANKLIN

Like,
Alessia really liked my work,
what I'm doing.
She's--
She's saying she is going to be putting all this push behind the show
and like,
that's a lot of pressure.
It's great but it's like,
...
do you get what I'm saying Andre?

Like,
Why would you--?

Andre finishes smoking his cigarette and puts it out. He has the last sip of his Negroni.

ANDRE
Franklin stand up.

Franklin looks up at him confused.

ANDRE
I said,
Stand up.

FRANKLIN
Andre...
are you going to listen
to what I have to say
or / are you just--

Andre throws the negroni glass against the wall. The gospel choir reacts.

ANDRE
STAND UP!

Franklin does.

ANDRE
All I do is listen!
I don't stop listening,
I listen in places deeper than you think you can penetrate!
...
...
...
Come over here.

Franklin begins to slowly walk over. Andre reaches out and grabs Franklin. It should be a bit frightening, a surprising display of raw virility.

ANDRE
(hugging him)
I’m sorry...

Andre begins to move with him, an awkward beginning to a slow dance. As they sway back and forth Franklin’s feet slowly move atop Andre’s, their dance growing more fluid and impressive with each passing line.

ANDRE
Honestly.
I’m sorry.
I just--
I want the best for you Franklin.
You’re special. /
...

FRANKLIN
You don’t have/
to just say

ANDRE
NO.
That first night
After the club,
For me, it was
...
it was, as if,
when I looked at you I saw this person who I needed to need me.
Immediately.
I needed you to see me as
a sort of--
a figure you could depend on?
Because I immediately became your dependant,
when you started deconstructing my entire--
my life’s worth essentially,
I immediately knew I needed you.
And more than that I needed you to need me.
...
...

The opening notes to Father Figure begin to play again, but this time Franklin doesn't notice. Instead Franklin looks up at Andre as they glide around the edge of the pool like Rodgers and Astaire.

ANDRE

Am I your boyfriend Franklin?
No.
No I'm not.
I think that's been clear since we met.
I don't want to be your boyfriend
or anyone else's.
What does that even look like?
(A man my age.)
...
...
A boyfriend?
No. I...
I want to take care of you.
I think you made it perfectly clear that night who--
Franklin,
I want you to know you don't have to pretend to be strong with me.

Gracefully, Andre disentangles himself from the dance and makes his way to the Gospel Choir who have started to assemble upstage near the glass sliding door.

As Andre sings the following the Gospel Choir follows behind. Andre sings earnestly, but this doesn't mean he sings well.

Franklin continues to dance as though with a partner, oblivious until the moment he isn't that Andre is singing a pop song to an audience.

ANDRE

That's all I wanted
Something special, something sacred
In your eyes
For just one moment
To be bold and naked
At your side
Sometimes I think that you'll never
Understand me
Maybe this time is forever
Say it can be, woah

That's all you wanted
Something special, someone sacred
In your life
Just for one moment
To be warm and naked
At my side.

The more he sings the more emboldened Andre becomes. Perhaps he dances, maybe he begins to disrobe, kicking off his shoes. Franklin continues to dance alone as though upon the feet of another but as he does so we see tears start to form in the corner of his eyes.

ANDRE

Sometimes I think you'll never
understand me
But something tells me together
We'd be happy, oh oh

I will be your father figure
(Oh baby)
Put your tiny hand in mine
(I'd love to)
I will be your preacher teacher
(Be your daddy)
Anything you have in mind
(It would make me)
I will be your father figure
(Very happy)
I have had enough of crime
(Please let me)
I will be the one who loves you
'Til the end of time

That's all I wanted
But sometimes love can be mistaken
For a crime
That's all I wanted
Just to see my baby's
Blue eyes shine
This time I think that my lover
Understands me
If we have faith in each other
Then we can be
Strong, baby

Andre is now in the pool, the Gospel Choir behind him in full tilt revelry.

Franklin, overcome by some welling grief or sadness collapses out of the dance and onto the ground.

FRANKLIN
(to some invisible Andre)

I'm fine.
I just, like...
need a few moments.
OK?
...

...
Ok?

Franklin looks up and once again sees past his current reality and into this other one where Andre is halfway through a George Michael song with a choir.

ANDRE

I will be your father figure
Put your tiny hand in mine
I will be your preacher teacher
Anything you have in mind
I will be your father figure
I have had enough of crime
I will be the one who loves you
'Til the end of time

Franklin shakes and shivers and with a new burst of energy opens up a dam of tears and wails. Once again, back in his reality.

BLACKOUT.

In the darkness we hear the sounds of sniffles as Franklin sniffs back his tears and the sounds of bodies moving through water as the Gospel Choir and Andre move out of the pool.

Then we hear the sound of a phone ringing. Loud and distinct: RING RING RING.

It should echo around the theatre listlessly until finally we hear:

BEEP!

FRANKLIN

Hi, you've reached Franklin.
Sorry I uh,
I can't get to the phone right now.

But if you need anything just leave a message
Or, like, send me an email
or a text
and I'll get back to you at my earliest convenience.
Um...
Thank you.

BEEP!

A pinhole of light illuminates just Zora's face. Gospel Choir hums a score to the following. It once again, should feel almost like a Shirley Caesar song.

ZORA

Son
you've being laying heavy on my heart
these past few weeks.
...
...
I don't know exactly where you've been
or who
you been running with
but it's left my spirit in a deep unease.
...
...
This morning
I got on my knees
and I prayed for you.
...
...
And let me tell ya
what the Lord's gonna do.
...
...
He's gonna ease your pain
at least that's what he said
He said don't you worry,
this all part of his plan...
...
...
He said I shouldn't have to tell you
You would already know.

If you weren't to busy
rippin' and runnin' up and down the road.
...
...
I'm calling for the last time
before I show up next week.
Don't let me find out
you ain't been prayin' constantly.
...
...
This show is important
or so you seemed to say
so make it a priority and get on your knees and pray.
...
...
Like Solomon says in Proverbs
chapter ten, verse one
a foolish son is a grief to his mother.
Don't be a grief baby.
...
...
I love you son,
I guess that is all.
OH!
Since you never asked,
I found my own hotel. (It's somewhere real expensive/ It's called the SOFITEL!)

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2
(FRANKLIN + ZORA)

SCENE1

In darkness the sound of human cannon balls and revelry cascade from the stage and ricochet throughout the space.

As the lights rise we see Zora standing among of the aftermath of a wild pool party. Neon lights fluoresce from the pool and Zora stands there illuminated, dressed in her outfit for the opening: a nice but not necessarily chic pantsuit (although given the way she holds herself, the outfit feels more expensive than it is), her handbag in the crook of her arm.

Franklin makes his way outside to her with two drinks in his hand. He hands her the rosè and smiles shyly before taking a sip of his drink. Zora looks at him for a moment before speaking.

A few members of the Gospel Choir, stragglers from the party, can be seen wandering in the back behind the glass door with little black dolls in their hands.

ZORA

Congratulations son.

FRANKLIN

(nervous)

Mom
this was
it's...

ZORA

So this how you living now?

FRANKLIN
(cowering)
No, mama
it's--
like
it's not like that.
Andre just said I could have the after party/ here so...

ZORA
Don't be ashamed baby.
It's nice.
Real nice.
Just a shame all of this been keeping you from answering your phone.

(pause, a raise of the eyebrow)
Who knows though...
Maybe the calls weren't going through.
I'm sure up here they pay to keep the signal weak.
Seclusion.
They like that...

Zora takes a liberal sip of her drink.

FRANKLIN
Mama
I told you,
I just,
I got busy.
The show...
and like...
I don't know.
It's like--

(like a teenager)
Ughhhhhhhhh.

Zora looks at him. She sees through his lie but why argue? She's more interested in that "ughhhhh".

ZORA

Yeah that show,
it was something.

FRANKLIN

Mama...

ZORA

What?
I'm serious.
It was something.
If I had known white people were gonna love those little dolls you were always making I would've had you out there selling them when you were little.
Joe Jackson style.
Then maybe I wouldn't have broke my back sending you to that damn art school
You could've sent yourself.

Franklin rolls his eyes and finishes his drink.

FRANKLIN

You want another?

ZORA

Don't think I'm not proud baby.
I am.
I mean...
You--
You made a room full of white folk walk around with little coon babies on their arms like they were Madonna or something.
Ha!
Angelina Jolie.
It was a sight to behold.
Coon babies...
They loved it.

FRANKLIN

Mama, don't/ call

ZORA

That's what they are!
Coon babies.
That what they used to call them when I was growing up
right there in the stores.
"COON BABIES".

We used to think they were ugly.
Nobody wanted to get them.
You'd just see coon baby
after coon baby
after coon baby lining the aisle at Christmas time.
That's whatcha should of called the show:
"Coon Babies".
Better yet: "Coon Babies At Christmas Time".
Everybody likes Christmas.
I don't know what you were doing calling it "Daddy".
What's that all about?

Zora looks at him harder this time as though she's willing a truth out of him that she knows he won't give.

FRANKLIN

It's about a lot of things
that
like
are personal?
And like,
I don't know.
Alessia thought/
that

Just as he says her name Alessia and Andre enter through the sliding doors.

ANDRE

AND THE LAST OF YOUR ADMIRERS
HAVE TURNED IN FOR THE NIGHT!
(to Zora)
Exciting, wasn't it?

Zora nods. Andre looks at her, a bit nervous in her presence.

Alessia excitedly rushes over and hugs Franklin.

ALESSIA

Franklin,
that was everything and more than I expected.

That--
Franklin it was perfect.
Sold out.
Completely.
Your first show.

(to Zora)

You should be very proud of your son.
That was...
That's --
It's VERY RARE for an artist of your son's --
well he's just so fresh, you know?
You don't see a green artist do this well on their first show.

ZORA

Well he's blessed.
Been that way his whole life.
The Lord has a lot in store for him.

FRANKLIN

Mama...

Alessia shifts uncomfortably.

ALESSIA

Yeah...
Well I'm sure a lot of people
on all planes of consciousness
are going to have a lot in store for Franklin.

(turns back to Franklin)

I think it's my bed time.
But, more tomorrow.
This---
You should be very proud.
This is a true accomplishment.
Bathe in it.

She hugs Franklin again and then with a wave Alessia exits.

Andre looks over to Franklin nervously as Zora finishes her wine and sets down her glass.

ANDRE

Zora,
let me show you your, uh
your room.
It's all set/ up and

ZORA

That's ok, Andre. I'm very comfortable at my hotel.

(she pulls out her phone)

I'm just going to--
(If I can figure this damn Uber thing out)
I'm just gonna head on over there.
it was a very nice party/ you threw for...

FRANKLIN

Andre,
mama's fine,
I'll get her an uber.

Franklin pulls out his phone.

ANDRE

Zora,
honestly
you would offend me if you didn't stay.
A mother shouldn't visit her son and be locked away from him in a hotel.
(That's --
no.
I won't have it.)
You're staying here.
I'll be right back,
I'm just going to make sure everything in the room is perfect.

Andre exits. Zora looks over at her son.

ZORA

(So this how you living now...)

Franklin looks away. Zora walks over and grabs his face tenderly. She places her temple against his.

ZORA
(whispering)
I love you baby,
you know that, right?

Franklin nods his head slowly.

ZORA
And you know I won't ever steer you wrong.

Franklin doesn't move.

ZORA
Something ain't right
I don't know if it's him or this place
or what
but right now...?
My spirit is unsettled.
...
...
You been praying?

FRANKLIN
Why?

ZORA
Because I don't think the Lord would've led you here.

FRANKLIN
Mama...

ZORA
Listen to me..
When I walked in here
the Lord laid some scripture on my spirit.

Franklin moves away from Zora but she grabs his arm and pulls him close, staring at him.

ZORA
When I walked into that gallery you looked at me with fear
and for a moment your eyes glazed over like you hated me.
You can't hide that from me.
I see you.

I see you baby
and that--
in that moment
that won't a look from my Franklin.
I don't know who looked at me but that look's been haunting me all night.
And when I walked in here all I heard was Second Timothy
Chapter 3:"But know this,/ that in the last days

FRANKLIN
/Mama stop.

ZORA
Perilous times will come.For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents /, unthankful, unholy.

Franklin starts fidgeting now, uncomfortable in his body like an adolescent.

FRANKLIN
(whining)
/Mama stooooooppppppppp.

Zora notices this and worry flashes deeply across her face but she keeps going:

ZORA
Unloving, unforgiving slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good.Traitors, headstrong, haughty lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Having a form of / godliness but denying its power

Franklin puts his hands up to his ears and begins stomping his feet on the ground.

FRANKLIN
(still whining in his voice)
/You don't know anything about him, Mama.
Calm this dowwwwnnnnn.

Zora recognizes this but has no idea why it is appearing again now. She does what she used to do with these situations: ignore it.

ZORA
And from such people turn away! For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of the gullible. Loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts.
Always / learning

Andre re-enters and Franklin immediately runs to him and grabs him at the torso throwing his head onto Andre's chest.

FRANKLIN
(whining)
SHE WON'T STOPPPPPPP-AH.

Andre looks at Franklin for a second as though wondering if he should follow his impulse to place a hand on his head.

ZORA
Franklin?
Something's got a hold of you.
And I don't like it.

Zora looks at Andre. Andre places a hand on Franklin's head.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 2

The lights rise on Andre and Zora sitting across from each other at a table just upstage of the pool. Salmon, eggs, bagels, and orange juice are strewn out before them.

A third plate sits between them completely clean and untouched.

They eat in silence. Andre is reading the news from his phone as Zora picks at her food, unimpressed.

ZORA
Is there any, um...
is there any salt?

Or um
or pepper?

ANDRE
(looking up)
What was that?

ZORA
Is there any salt here?
Or pepper?

ANDRE
Oh!
Um, yes.
Yes there is but...
It should be seasoned to--
I'll go,
just give me one moment.

Andre exits.

Zora takes a bite and looks at the pool and the sky and city down below the hill.

Andre returns with three larger grinders.

ANDRE
I didn't know if you'd prefer pink Himalayan
or just natural sea salt so I brought both.
And here's the pepper.

Zora laughs.

ZORA
That's a lot of contraption for just a little salt and pepper.

ANDRE
What?

ZORA
I said that's a lot of contraption.

ANDRE
Oh.

ZORA

I don't know even know--
What's "pink Himalayan"?

ANDRE

Oh!
It's um...
well it's a sort of
(he laughs)
Well it's healthy?
Healthier,
I guess than...
than...

ZORA

Than salt for normal folk.

ANDRE

No no no no no
I just / mean--

ZORA

I'll try some of that pink stuff.

Andre hands her the salt and she begins to apply it liberally to her breakfast before picking up the pepper and doing the same.

GRIND
GRIND
GRIND
GRIND
GRIND

ZORA

When is Franklin getting up?
He said he wanted to take me to
Lacam or something
but if he don't get up
I'm gonna take my behind on down to that Rose Bowl
he used to talk about so much.

ANDRE

Oh the Rose Bowl
is a delight,
but you really should let him take you to LACMA.
You should see it before he ends up there.

ZORA

Oh!
You think he's gonna get in a museum?

ANDRE

Of course.
Don't you?

ZORA

I'm his mother.
I think he'll get into LACMA, BACMA, FAFSA
wherever the hell he wanna be
when he wanna be there.
I'm asking bout you.
What makes YOU so sure.
(she laughs)

ANDRE

Because he's a true artist.
A true talent.
It's undeniable.

ZORA

It's undeniable?
I like that.
undeniable.
huh!
....
...
...

Andre looks at Zora. A sentence swallowed back down.

ANDRE

I should go see if he's up.

ZORA

Andre?

ANDRE

Yes, Zora?

ZORA

What are you?
What is this?

ANDRE

What do you mean?

ZORA

You know what I mean.
I'm not trying to be rude
or anything like that.
Let's just,
speak on what this is.

ANDRE

Well
...
...

ZORA

Well?
Are you his mentor...
a school teacher...
are you his friend...
his lover?

ANDRE

I think this is a conversation for you and Franklin.
And moreover,
it feels like crass early morning conversation.
I feel like the relationship between Franklin and I
is pretty evident.
I know you've not been here very long
but I feel as though I have shit face for poker
so...
it is exactly as it seems to you.

ZORA
Which is?

ANDRE
Which is as it seems.

ZORA
Ha!

ANDRE
You seem incredulous Zora.

ZORA
Well--

ANDRE
Incredulous means to / be

ZORA
I know what the word means!

FRANKLIN
Mama?

Franklin has entered.

ZORA
Franklin!
How long were you there?

FRANKLIN
What do you mean?

Andre walks over to Franklin and kisses him tenderly.

ANDRE
I think you and your mother should head to LACMA
she has questions about our relationship.

FRANKLIN
Questions?

ANDRE

Zora,
you were a wonderful breakfast companion.
I apologize if my
zeal
or
embarrassment
got in the way of us having a real conversation.

FRANKLIN

A real conversation about what?

ANDRE

I'm going to go ...
have fun with your mother.

Andre exits.

FRANKLIN

A real conversation about what?

ZORA

What's ya'lls relationship?
That your boyfrined?

FRANKLIN

...
...
...
We are def partners.
I don't know that I'd call us boyfriends.

ZORA

What would you call yourselves?

FRANKLIN

...
...
...
...
...

...
...Bonded.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 3

Behind the closed sliding glass door Franklin is working studiously on a new soft sculpture. We can see from where we are that whatever he is working on is much larger than the pieces we saw before. Perhaps he is working on a foot that's quite large or an arm he could wrap around his body.

Outside, Max and Bellamy are sitting on chaise lounges. Bellamy is reading to Max from her iPhone with the precision of someone who's not used to hearing gangly words crawl from her mouth.

BELLAMY
"While holding these crude, misshapen dolls
one feels like a priest of the voodun, or some other mystic.
Touched by a spirit that's frightening in its purity."
...
uh it's so long...
But ok,
I get the point.
They liked it?
or something...

Max grabs the phone from her and scrolls down.

MAX
Yes!
But-
ugh...
l wanted to read you this:
"Moreover the young artist,
besides capturing the imaginations of Beverly Hills' young and hip,
if vapid,
contemporary / art crowd..."

BELLAMY
That's us right?

MAX
"he ALSO seems to have cast a spell on
a certain prodigious collector
who invited the artist and his virile cohorts back to his
expansive Bel Air estate to celebrate
into the wee hours of the night after his opening."

Max looks at Bellamy expectantly.

BELLAMY
That's
amazing.
Oh my god!
Can you send me that?
I NEED
to insta that quote.
Like, /
that's major.

MAX
No but
like
you're not getting it.
Like,
what the fuck?

BELLAMY
I don't get what you're saying.

MAX
It's so sketch.
Is what I'm saying.

Bellamy takes her phone back from Max and puts it in her purse. Behind them Zora has walked into the work space and is watching Franklin work, she has a towel in her hand.
(Maybe she says something to him we can't hear every now and then)

BELLAMY

Why is that sketch?

MAX

Because
like
it's just like
gross
you know?
Like Franklin's
a good dude.
And he's super talented.
Obviously.
So why
like...
It's just
Why can't it be about like...
...
...
...
That's just sad.
That's
like...
...
...
Like focus on the work
That's like that time that
like
that director?
You remember?
He was like
"it's yours
just
all you have to do
is like
just..."
and then
he like
invited me on his plane?
To go with him and the producer to Coachella
and he was like
...

(he does something with his hands)

and like
the “just”
was like
obviously
for me
him
and the producer
to like...
fuck
or whatever.
Mile High Club.
And like
that was gross.
you know?

BELLAMY

But you did fuck him.
And you did get the part.

Max looks at Bellamy like she’s stupid.

MAX

Yeah
and I regretted it.
I only did it because
I was horny.
Because
ew
And he wanted me to date him.
Like
I could have dated him
and then I would have been the like
fucking LEAD
in a movie that premiered at Telluride.
But I didn’t
because
like
I don’t know...

Zora slides open the door quietly and walks outside. Bellamy and Max don’t notice.

BELLAMY

You're being super weird
Max.
This is all a good thing.

ZORA

What're y'all talking about?

Max looks up surprised.

MAX

Oh, I'm sorry Ms. Zora.

ZORA

Why are you sorry.

BELLAMY

Because...

ZORA

Because ya'll were talking about my son laying up in bed with Methuselah?
HaHa.

Max laughs.

BELLAMY

Who's Methuselah?

Zora hugs Bellamy and looks over at Max smiling.

ZORA

Aw baby...I'm just playing. What do you all think of grandpa though?

She pulls a chair up and sits with them. Crossing her legs and immediately holding court.

BELLAMY

Andre?
I like him.
He's super cool.

Zora looks past Bellamy to Max.

ZORA
What about you baby? You always know what's going on. Whatta you think about him?

MAX
Um...

Max looks to Bellamy.

MAX
It's like...
it's one of those things
where I don't really /
know...

ZORA
Well I'll tell you right now I don't like him. I don't trust him. There's something creepy about him. He--
I don't know. I can't put my finger right on it. He just. He reminds me....
He's REAL similar to Franklin's father.

MAX
Really?
Franklin's never told us anything about his dad.

BELLAMY
That's true.
It's kind of weird.

ZORA
It ain't weird.
He just don't know him.
I was...
Well
in my younger days
I would rip and run
up and down the streets
and you know I met this--
He was a real man.
Strong.
He'd pick me up
with one hand
that kind of strong.
And he took care of me.

He was my--
he was at the time,
the love of my life.
After,
you know
it was Franklin. But,
at that time...
he was my world.
Couldn't close my eyes without feeling his on me
couldn't speak without hoping the words would live inside of his ears when they left my mouth.
I would've torn my insides out if he asked me to...
Or so I thought.
Cause then,
you know I got pregnant
and
all of a sudden
this little idea on my insides
was all I could see.
My eyelids were branded with an image I could almost make out every time I closed my eyes,
when I spoke the words danced outta my mouth and right down to my belly before they could get any further.
He didn't like that
and suddenly,
he didn't feel the need to be strong no more
if he couldn't be strong just for me.
I don't think he ever was.
He wore the strength like his mask.
He was worried this idea would see under it
see his weakness.
And I think this
you know
Andre?
I think he's the same.
Fraid of an idea he don't even know he's conceived.
But who knows,
I've been made a fool by better men.

Bellamy and Max sit in silence with Zora.

After a while:

BELLAMY
I really do
I really like him Ms. Zora.
I think he's really good for Franklin.

Zora looks at Bellamy, smiles, then stands. She turns her back to Bellamy revealing the zipper on the back of her dress.

ZORA
Unzip this for me baby.

She does.

ZORA
You know I haven't been in a pool in almost ten years?

MAX
Woah.
That is literally my idea of hell.

ZORA
Well--

She slips out of her dress.

ZORA
Franklin keeps telling me that "Andre has the best pool". That I "need to just jump in." That I "don't know what I'm missing." Saltwater. Blah blah blah.

She pauses, then walks toward the pool.

BELLAMY
It's really nice!

ZORA
You with an old man too ain't you?

Max snorts.

BELLAMY
What?
(To Max)
Why'd you tell her that?

ZORA
Nobody had to tell me nothing. I can see it all over your spirit.

Zora looks at Bellamy closer. She's almost in the pool now. Perhaps she has grabbed hold to the handle.

ZORA
But ...
Franklin, he--
(her feet touch the water)
The hell?

BELLAMY
What is it?

ZORA
Is it always this hot?

MAX
Hot?

Max walks over and puts his hand in.

BELLAMY
It's temperature controlled.
During the day
it like,
should be whatever the like
temperature of the ocean is.

MAX
Yeah, it feels normal to me.

ZORA
This feels normal?

Zora steps deeper into the water, eyeing it with distrust.

ZORA
Huh...

Zora looks back. Franklin, behind the glass is lifting up whatever part of his new doll he has created and is dancing with it like no one is watching.

Zora takes a big breath then dives deep into the pool.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 4

Franklin and Andre are sitting on a chaise lounge together. Andre is rubbing Franklin's hair or head as Franklin unrolls a Blow Pop.

Franklin's new half-completed doll is hanging out of the slightly open glass door.

FRANKLIN

I disagree!
She-
If like,
If she...
(AHH!)
I'm getting tongue-tied.
What / I am try

ANDRE

Because you have nothing to say! For once, you realize / that I'm right.

FRANKLIN

No,
she...
...
Carl Andre's work is
objectively
less interesting than her work.
Point blank.

So to say that like the reason it's more "prudent"
that someone invest in a
fucking
Carl Andre piece
over an Ana Mendiata piece
is that
"he currently holds
more worth
in the market"
is just facile.
That's lazy.
I find that to be a bad investment.
You're investing poorly.
Because, of course he holds more worth
he's fucking alive.
She isn't.

He begins to lick the Blow Pop.

FRANKLIN

But when he's dead
no one
will remember him as anything other
than the dude that killed one of the world's / greatest artists.

ANDRE

/Oh come on!
That's not fair.

FRANKLIN

And who shat out like
two good poems.
It's not fair that he fucking killed someone and got away with it.
(I can't believe you would own something of his)

ANDRE

Didn't you say,
"art is worthless when it's owned"?

Franklin looks at him confused.

FRANKLIN
I said that?

ANDRE
Yeah...
Our first night.
...
I asked you to help me find better art for the walls.
And you said:
“art is worthless when it’s owned”

FRANKLIN
I was so high that night
I barely /remember

ANDRE
(remembering)
NO!
What you said was,
“art loses its worth the minute it can be owned.”

Franklin sucks hard on the Blow Pop and thinks for a second.

FRANKLIN
Well if I did
then like
what I was saying was that--
well yeah--
art
when it’s owned
is like...
or... like?
The minute it’s no longer being created
and is like heading to a gallery
it’s dirty.
Right?
Like that’s why like
outsider artists are just
better, or at least more pure.

They like
are free to just create
they don't have to worry
about like
what their art is going to mean
for like
their rent
or like their like
food.
It just is.
It exists because it was made
and for no other reason.

Andre hugs Franklin tight. Squeezing him close to his body like a doll. He starts to slowly kiss Franklin on his head--slow and unerotic.

ANDRE

Well Little Naomi,
if you want to be an outsider artist I've got you.
If I'm the only one who ever sees what you do?
That...
I'd have no problem with that.

Franklin moves away from him, surreptitiously wiping his neck and head.

FRANKLIN

Well I would.

ANDRE

You would?

FRANKLIN

I think...

ANDRE

...

FRANKLIN

It's just---
Yeah!
I don't know?
It's like...

ANDRE

It's like,
"what would my mom think?"
Sorry...
"Mama."

Franklin looks at him for a moment. He's gotten to the part in the Blow Pop that's unsuckable. He bites into the Blow Pop and begins to chew the gum waiting inside.

FRANKLIN

What?

ANDRE

I open my home to that woman and she...
The way she looks at me?
That stare?

FRANKLIN

Well, she's difficult.
I told you that she should stay somewhere else.
like..
ugh...
I don't even know why,
what does that/ even have to do

ANDRE

Why would you want that?

FRANKLIN

Why?
Because she's my mother.
That's why.
It's been a week I can/ tell her--

ANDRE

And you're ashamed.
Of all this.

FRANKLIN

No.
It's
It's not that.

Why would I be?
She--
you guys are saying the same shit and it's whack,
like.
It's not shame.

ANDRE

Then what is it?
...
...
Huh?
...
You've been different since she arrived. She's done something to you.

FRANKLIN

Different?

ANDRE

Yeah. She's gotten under your skin. You've been stumbling around in and out of your studio. This is the first time we've just--
You haven't even touched me since she arrived.

FRANKLIN

I have a lot of work to do. After the show I just--
I hate all the work that Alessia sold and I'm just...I want to make something new. Different.

ANDRE

And that makes me disgusting to you?

FRANKLIN

No. It's not-
I just need some space.

ANDRE

Space?
What do you mean by space?

FRANKLIN

I don't want to talk about it.

ANDRE

Why?

FRANKLIN

Because I don't.

ANDRE

Franklin...

Franklin looks up to the sky and takes a deep breath and then looks at Andre.

He holds his breath, slightly shaking and staring directly at Andre.

ANDRE

Franklin?

Andre walks towards Franklin. Franklin slaps his own face. Andre stops.

Staring at Andre Franklin does it again, this time harder. Andre reaches for Franklin.

ANDRE

What are you doing Franklin? Stop!

Franklin begins slapping his face harder and harder now as Andre tries to grab for his hands. Andre grabs his arms and roughly pulls them to his sides.

Franklin exhales and spits, the gum flying out of his mouth and into the pool. He starts to slowly breathe normally again.

ANDRE

What the fuck is wrong with you?

FRANKLIN

...
You weren't listening to me.
...

Franklin falls deeper into Andre's arm. Franklin grabs his face and begins to slowly kiss him pushing him back towards a chaise.

Andre looks up at Franklin as he falls into the chaise. Franklin bends down and kisses Andre roughly, pulling back with an audible bite. As Andre wipes away the beginning of what may be blood Franklin flashes a smile.

ANDRE
(wincing)
That was incredibly unnecessary.

FRANKLIN
You're the one who wanted me to touch you.
...
...
(pause)
Do we have anymore weed?

ANDRE
I think there's some in the kitchen.

FRANKLIN
Could you roll us a joint?

Andre looks at Franklin, he takes him in, processing what just happened.

FRANKLIN
I'm fine. I just need to sleep. I'm--like I'm stressing and she's in my head. You're right. I have been different.

ANDRE
(he heads towards the door)
You coming?

FRANKLIN
Yeah just give me a second.

ANDRE
I love you, Little Naomi.

FRANKLIN

...

ANDRE

I love you.
You're mine, I'm yours.
Remember that?

Andre waits a moment for an answer... he exits.

Franklin stands by the pool looking out as silence give way to unfamiliar chords from some far away synthesizer. He looks up and out again at us, his world once again bleeding into ours.

Franklin opens his mouth as though he wants to say something to us, but he swallows his words.

Franklin looks back to the door where his half completed doll is lying. He walks over and grabs the half formed piece and holds it, awkwardly cradling it.

He begins to hum to it as he rocks back and forth, back and forth.

FRANKLIN
(whispered, to the doll)

I love you. You're mine.
....
You're mine.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 5

Franklin and Zora sit outside. Zora, on a chaise, watches Franklin as he sorts through a pile of XXXL clothes that he tosses onto a nearby lounge.

The glass door is closed and Franklin's large black soft sculpture can be seen 3/4th's complete.

FRANKLIN

--were right,
you know?
Like.
I did make a bunch of "coon babies".
And it kind of pissed me off
like
that I didn't even think of that?
So I--
Well that's why
...
I don't know?
That's where he came from.

Zora smiles and gets up to make herself a drink.

FRANKLIN

...
What do you think?
He's...
Well he's sort of ours...
I didn't realize it till--
but
I wouldn't have come up with him if you hadn't--
I don't / know...

Zora walks over to him and looks at his elbows.

ZORA

How did you let your skin get this dry?

FRANKLIN

Huh?

ZORA

It's that pool probably. I don't like that pool. It's too hot. Like a damn sauna. Come here.

Zora pulls Franklin down and rummages through her purse for some cocoa butter.

She places him between her legs and starts to rub cocoa butter on his back and arms. She does this in silence for a bit.

FRANKLIN
Mama?

ZORA
Shhhh....It's real nice hearing your voice every day baby. It. Yeah. It really is.

FRANKLIN
Ha.
Ok...

ZORA
(finishing up)
You know I'm no good at all this. I'm sure that... I'm sure your annointin' is leading you where you need to be right now. So...

Franklin stands up and looks at Zora for moment before becoming a total teenager.

FRANKLIN
Why do you do that, Mama?

ZORA
Do what?

FRANKLIN
I like...
I start talking about one thing
and
like
obviously I want...
like, you to--
I don't know...
Recognize it?
Me?
And like...
Stay on the fucking topic?
/ And you

ZORA
Hey!

FRANKLIN

You continue to like
talk bullshit.
And it's just mean.
I don't.
I don't think that like once
you've even like
tried to say that you were proud of me
since you've like been here.
You just walk around and like, make everyone uncomfortable.
You like look at Andre weird, you're mean to my gallerist...and frankly,
like, I don't give a fuck about my "anointing" or whatever the fu--

Zora slaps him and grabs his face. She squeezes his cheeks together with her hands making it almost impossible for him to speak.

ZORA

I said "hey". Now I don't know who you "like" think you're "like" talking to "like", but YOU KNOW and I KNOW that's not how MY SON talks. You ain't "Max" and you ain't "Bellamy" and I'm not either one of their mamas. So let's check the "bullshit's and the "fucks" at the door. Alright?

...

(She waits for an answer)

...Alright?

Through squeezed cheeks:

FRANKLIN

Yes, Ma'am.

Still squeezing...

ZORA

I'm sorry I can't talk to you the way you want me to about how great you are, how clever all your little ideas are but that's cause you ain't great, they ain't clever and they weren't yours to begin with.

...

...

Her grip loosens and she starts to caress his face gently. Franklin breathes deeply, slowly.

FRANKLIN

...thanks, Mama...

ZORA

What I'm tellin' you if you were listening, if you remembered how you were raised instead of how you wished you were, is that we do nothing without the blessings of the Father. You forget that? Humility. Grace. These things before all else. Instead...you up here partying, drinking, doing drugs with Methuselah.

FRANKLIN

I don't do drugs.

ZORA

Don't lie to me...

(Franklin looks away)

What happened to the little Franklin that would sit on my lap in the front pew of church and knew every book of the Bible by heart? Who would make little dolls for his Sunday school class and act out little scenes from the Bible? David and Goliath, Samson and Delilah, Doubting Thomas...

FRANKLIN

(a whine)

I don't know...

...

...

Behind the door we can see Andre with two packages. He stops before entering, observing the intimate moment.

ZORA

I think you need to come back home for a little bit.

FRANKLIN

What?
Why-e?

ZORA

Because I don't know that you're yourself here.

FRANKLIN

Mama, I can't do that.

ZORA
Why don't we pray on it?

FRANKLIN
I don't pray.

ZORA
Let's just pray on it.

Zora grabs Franklin's hands and starts to pull him down as:

ANDRE
(sliding open the door)
He comes bearing gifts!

Andre awkwardly pushes open the door with his foot the rest of the way.

ZORA
Actually we were about to pray Andre if you don't mind...

Andre sets the two packages down.

ANDRE
Pray?
I didn't know you were a Catholic, Franklin.

ZORA
He's not.
We're Baptists.

ANDRE
Baptists?

Franklin walks over and gives Andre a kiss.

FRANKLIN
What did you get us?

ZORA
Franklin we / were...

ANDRE
Was I interrupting something? *

FRANKLIN
Mama, later.
(to Andre)
What is it?

Andre looks from Franklin to Zora. He hands Zora a package.

ANDRE
Well...
I wanted to show you, Zora, how much I appreciate both of you being here.
So I racked my brain, trying to think of what best to get you...
you're a hard one to shop for.
Hopefully, it will get easier as we,
you know
get to know each other.
But
I called my friend over at Hermes and told him about you
and he said that no woman would be able to resist one of these
so
I got you one
and a scarf
because "no woman should be without."

Zora opens the boxes revealing a very expensive purse.

FRANKLIN
(through a squeal)
Oh my god.
That's insane. *

Zora smiles through thin lips.

ZORA
Yes. Thank you Andre. This is very nice...

Andre looks around nervously.

ANDRE
Oh no, you don't like the color do you?

FRANKLIN
(torn) *
Don't be silly, it's a Birkin.
She / loves it.

ZORA
I have a purse. The color is fine. But I have a purse. So I said thank you, but..

FRANKLIN *
(Oh my god)

ANDRE
...

FRANKLIN
What about me?
What did I get?
I'm easy to impress.

Zora looks over and away.

ANDRE
(handing him a box)
Well based on our conversation the other night, I almost got you a Mendieta. Haha. But it wouldn't have gotten here by this afternoon. So...

Franklin excitedly tears open a box as Andre slowly bends down. He freezes when he sees what's inside. He drops it and slowly backs away. He walks through the doorway.

Andre looks around confused. Zora walks over and picks up the box. The chord from before begins to play softly, slowly crescendoing as the scene ends.

ZORA
Why'd you get him this?

ANDRE
What just happened?

ZORA
Why did you get him this?

ANDRE
Zora, excuse me but I / need to go find Franklin.

ZORA
No. Excuse me. I asked you a question. Why, did you get him this?

ANDRE
Because I love him. That's why.

ZORA
Look at me. In my eyes.
(he does)
Tell me what you "love". What is it EXACTLY? Because I don't feel it.

ANDRE
It's not for you to feel. It's for him.

ZORA
No. That boy in there is mine. That's my baby. His whole life I felt what he feels. In here. And I don't feel love. Here right now. I don't. It's something else. Something / different.

ANDRE
(choosing his words carefully)
Zora, you're very upset. Obviously.
I should have talked to you more before today, I'm sorry.
You make me uncomfortable,
in my own home, you make me uncomfortable.
Maybe it's because seeing you is like seeing a deep part of him
a part he hasn't shown me yet.
But what you need to know is that he will,
he's shown me parts of Franklin you haven't seen,
can't see.
Things I can't unseen and that I can't articulate.
Things that make you vibrate in their presence.
Electric.
...
...
...
I just want to go talk to Franklin.
I want to end this
and go to him.
I'm not competing with you. This isn't a competition.

ZORA
(pointing at him)
That right there. See. You can't even say what it is. You'd rather finance his affections then name your own. I'll go see what's wrong / with him.

ANDRE
He has this little spot!
That I saw,
I felt,
when I first met him that slowly I've burrowed my way into.
It's warm
and it's bright.
And I don't know if I'm big enough fill it but I love the fact that it's there.
I love that I get to try.

Zora stares at Andre for a moment breathing in this moment of honesty.

ZORA
You think he saw a spot like that in you?
Huh?

ANDRE
...
I don't know.

ZORA
And you don't care.
And that's the problem.

Zora hands Andre the box before she exits.

Andre sits down looking at the box in his hand he sets it down on the chaise.

END OF ACT 2

ACT 3
(FRANKLIN)

SCENE 1

The haunting chords from before continue to play as the lights slowly rise, first from the pool then from Franklin's studio behind the glass doors where Franklin sits finishing his sculpture surrounded by the Gospel Choir looking on.

Franklin diligently attaches a head to his soft sculpture doppleganger before standing him up and leaving the room. He returns with another sculpture shaped like his mother before placing her next to the wall and leaving again to grab a large white, featureless sculpture that we can assume is Andre.

The Gospel Choir sways back and forth to the rhythm of the chords as they begin to, almost imperceptibly, sing a song with no words. Not that we would be able to hear them, the doors are closed.

Franklin positions the Zora sculpture next to the Andre sculpture as though they are sleeping. He stares at them for a while. Then he places the Franklin sculpture at their feet in the fetal position. His hand at his mouth as though sucking on his thumb.

The gospel choir raises their hands like they are praising the lord.

Franklin then places the Zora doll head next to the Andre doll head and smushes them around, forcing them to kiss. He grabs the Franklin doll and makes his hand clap.

The gospel choir begins to clap as well, moving around like the tempo has gotten quicker even though the chord is still moving at the same haunting pace. Franklin grabs the Andre doll and throws him on his stomach.

He sets the Zora doll on a table to watch. He picks up the Franklin doll and places him behind the Andre doll. He forces the Franklin doll to violently thrust into the Andre doll, over and over and over again. Then Franklin picks up the Franklin doll and has him slap the Andre doll. Then he slowly pulls the Franklin doll to the glass and presses his body into the dolls body as they slowly move across the glass until finally they collapse.

Franklin looks over and sees the box on the chaise. Franklin pulls a ring out of the box. He looks at the big Franklin and gasps surprised.

FRANKLIN
(to the sculpture)

I love you!
You're mine...

He kisses the sculpture then puts on the ring. At that moment, Andre walks in and looks down at Franklin on the floor.

ANDRE

Franklin?

Franklin looks up through glistening eyes.

FRANKLIN

...Yes, daddy?
Yes!
Yes Daddy!

Franklin looks up and begins to giggle uncontrollably. He grabs Andre's hand and pulls him into him, giggling and smiling too tickled to even kiss.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 2

It's late. Nobody is outside. The pool sits there glistening in the late night light. In the background we can see Franklin's new larger soft sculptures now dressed in formalwear.

Then we hear the sound of a phone ringing. It's there, glowing by the pool: RING RING RING.

The ring wanders around the theatre, stumbling into the walls until finally we hear:

BEEP!

FRANKLIN

Hi, you've reached Franklin.
Sorry I uh,
I can't get to the phone right now.
But if you need anything just leave a message
Or, like, send me an email
or a text
and I'll get back to you at my earliest convenience.
Um...
Thank you.

BEEP!

Silence. Perhaps the sound of some breath from far off, but overwhelmingly silent.

BEEP!

The lights in the white room come on. And a tipsy Andre and Franklin walk outside to the pool. As they shut the door Franklin starts undressing to skinny dip.

ANDRE

How excited are you?

Franklin's moved from teen to child now...

FRANKLIN

I just want to get wet.

ANDRE

Franklin
take a second to process
exactly
what is happening right now.

Franklin jumps in the pool.

FRANKLIN

You take a second!

Andre looks down and starts to take off his shoes.

ANDRE

Getting an international follow up to your
first solo show with a--
well it's huge.
That's--
You should be freaking out right now.

Franklin splashes him with a big wave of water. Then puts his thumb in his mouth.

ANDRE

Not on these, Franklin!
Fuck.
These are suede.

FRANKLIN

Sorry.

He takes his thumb out of his mouth then Franklin splashes him again.

ANDRE

Franklin.
Stop this.
This is unacceptable.

Andre picks up his shoes and inspects the damage.

FRANKLIN

You wanna spank me?
huh?
Fiaaaaannnnceé.

(in “Single Ladies” rhythm)

Oh oh oh
oh oh oh
oh oh oh oh...

Franklin smiles before he throws more water connecting, once again, with the shoes. Andre jumps back.

After a moment, Andre takes off the rest of his clothes, throws the shoes by the side of the pool and jumps in. He swims to Franklin and grabs him. Pulling his face close to his own.

Then abruptly, he begins walking out of the pool, a wet Franklin in his arms. He throws Franklin onto a chaise on his stomach and holds him down a knee. He reaches down grabs one of his suede shoes and brings it down forcefully on Franklin’s backside.

FRANKLIN

Ow.

ANDRE

Apologize.

Franklin looks up and laughs a bit. Andre begins hitting him harder, the sound of the WHOP! as wet as Franklin. With every syllable he brings the shoe down. Franklin convulsing about in rhythm to his beating.

ANDRE

I
Said
TO
A-
POL-
O-
GIZE /
TO
ME.

FRANKLIN

/ FUCK! OW!

ANDRE

SO
FUCK
ING
A-
POL
O-
GIZE
NOW!

On “now” the shoe flies out of Andre’s hand, so forceful were his hits.

Franklin may be crying, he may not but he’s definitely shaking. That wasn’t a good spanking.

FRANKLIN

I apologize.

Andre picks up the other shoe and slaps him again hard, once.

ANDRE

Who are you apologizing to?

FRANKLIN

I apologize, Daddy.

Andre hits him again.

ANDRE
Apologize for what?

FRANKLIN
I apologize for splashing you with water, Daddy.

Zora can be seen in the room behind them staring out. Andre hits Franklin.

ANDRE
That's not why.

FRANKLIN
I apologize for splashing you with water and ruining your suede shoes Daddy.

ANDRE
(hitting him as he talks)
That's not it either.

Again the phone begins to ring: RING RING RING.

Franklin looks up at Andre, who looks back at Franklin. Franklin reaches over for his phone.

ANDRE
Who is it?

FRANKLIN
Blocked.

ANDRE
Ignore it.

Franklin looks down at the phone. He hits "send to voicemail".
BEEP!

FRANKLIN
Hi, you've reached Franklin.
Sorry I uh,
I can't get to the phone right now.

But if you need anything just leave a message
Or, like, send me an email
or a text
and I'll get back to you at my earliest convenience.
Um...
Thank you...

BEEP!

The sound of a thin inhalation is heard. Slowly Zora exits before she is seen in the white room.

ANDRE
Are you sure you're ready for tomorrow?

Franklin looks at him without a word.

ANDRE
...I need to know that / you are...

FRANKLIN
Daddy tell me a story.

ANDRE
I need to know that you--

FRANKLIN
I'll tell you one.

ANDRE
Franklin, / I--

FRANKLIN
Mama thinks,
that when he came I don't remember.
But I do.
I do remember.
I was upstairs,
in my room,
and I was watching out the window when he drove up
and got out the car.
He was.
He was tall...but he won't like
real tall?
He was like tall enough.

And he was real gray.
And he told her that he wanted to see me.
And she said “no”
She said, “He’s good. That baby is good
he don’t need you.”
And he said, “But I need him”
I think.
I couldn’t really hear, but
I think
I think that’s what he said.
He said, “But I need him”.
And she said a bad word...
She called him a bad word
and so he left.

(Franklin takes a moment)

And when he left I said it.
The bad word.
I looked outside and opened my window
and I said,
“That’s right,
I don’t know need you,
I don’t need you
you ‘do nothing nigga’.”
And I closed up the window.
I shut it tight.
And then I started playing with my dolls.

Franklin stands up and yawns and starts to put his clothes back on.

FRANKLIN

I’m sorry for splashin’ you, Daddy.
I’m-
I’m gonna go up to bed.

Franklin exits. Andre sits considering Franklin’s story as the lights slowly fade.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 3

An early morning sun dances over the pool, little crystals seem to dance upon the water like diamonds before Zora who is on her knees at the pools edge, praying.

ZORA

Father,
you
and you alone
know why you test us the way you do,
why you place before us demons and spirits in our path
who hold jewels like none our eyes have ever beheld
who spin keys before us that open doors you've told us should be locked till morrow.
I know this Lord.
I know it like I know you made the air for me to breath
and the eyes through which I see.
But I'm here before you,
humble,
and at my end
asking that you reveal a bit of your divine plan to me
so that I won't feel so lost today, O lord...
You spoke to me Father.
You spoke
and you told me,
"Go."
And I did.
I came.
And you spoke more,
you said,
"Look"
And I did.
And I saw.
Lord did I see.
I saw and saw more than I thought I would, could, shoulda seen
but I did it Lord
because you were speaking to me, through me Lord.
But you've been quiet these past few days.
Silent.
...
...
...

I don't know Lord.
Maybe you been speaking.
Just too soft?
...
Can you speak up?
Yell a bit?
The devil,
he screaming.
Every morning, day, night
he screaming.
I know the sun and the stars are your province Lord
but here,
in this place
it feels like the Sunshine is a megaphone for the Devil Lord:
And I can't hear myself think,
let alone hear you speak,
so I need you to yell out Lord.
Yell out from the most high
and tell me what I need to do.
Cuz something done grabbed hold of my boy Lord
and I need your help casting it out.
I need you Lord.
This city a legion running through my baby's body
in his blood
his bones
and even with all this water here to drown them
I don't see no sheep I can curse with his affliction.
He ain't speaking to me Lord in his voice
He speaking in a voice I remember but don't recognize.

In suit pants and no shirt just an untied tie
Franklin enters and looks over to his mother.
Even in a suit everytihng about him feels all of
eight years old.

ZORA

So Lord I'm asking,
begging,
that you speak to me right now...
Tell me / what you woul--

FRANKLIN

Mama?
Mommy?

Zora looks back at him with tear stained eyes. Franklin holds part of the untied tie towards her.

ZORA

Franklin?

FRANKLIN

Mama?
I gotta--
Will you do the tie for me?
I wanna--
I gotta practice the tie
and I wanna
I need you to show me first.

Zora looks up unsure if this is the answer to the prayer she'd been praying.

ZORA

Why you wanna do the tie right now baby?

FRANKLIN

Because if I don't do it now,
try it,
I won't be able to do it later
and I don't want everyone to be mad at me.
I don't--
It's--
I have to wear a tie.
You wear ties.
I gotta wear one.

Zora gets off her knees. She slowly walks over and looks at Franklin. She takes him in. For a long moment before she slowly begins to tie the tie.

ZORA

You ain't asked me to do this for you in a long time.

FRANKLIN
It's cuz I don't have to wear them.
I'm an artist.
Artists don't wear ties.
We're too poor.

Franklin laughs at his own joke.

ZORA
Yeah...
...
(she continues to tie)
Let me ask you something Franklin.

FRANKLIN
Yes ma'am?

She finishes with the tie.

ZORA
First, you like it?

Franklin walks over to the pool and looks down at his reflection.

FRANKLIN
You did it real good, Mama, thank you.

ZORA
You're welcome baby.
...
...
Franklin, baby...
tell me bout the sex.

Franklin looks up the pool disgusted.

FRANKLIN
The what?

ZORA
The sex.
Tell me about it.
It must be good if you so in love.

FRANKLIN

Ew mom!
Gross.

ZORA

Nah you grown, I'm grown. And I wanna know.
how he makes you feel.
I remember how good it can feel to be held by somebody old
somebody wrinkled.
Your skin feels tighter in their hands
like it'll never let loose of your bones
and you get tight all over
everywhere
and they can feel it too.
And you can feel them feel it
and it makes you feel invincible
because what they're feeling ain't your beauty…
it's your life that seems everlasting in their eyes.
…
So tell me bout the sex.
Do it make you feel invincible?
Like you breath deeper and harder than anyone else?
What does it do to you Franklin?
Do your knees buckle?
You feel faint?
Tell me Franklin.
Tell me.
What is it that Methusaluh do that rile you up so much?
How does he have you walking around here about four degrees from stup/id ev--

Franklin is trembling and looking away. Zora stops and listens.

God's silence is like a fog horn.

ZORA

...
Baby.
You look handsome today.

FRANKLIN

Thank you.

ZORA

You're my handsome boy.
You know that?

FRANKLIN

Thank you.

ZORA

You know I love you.
You're mine.
You know that right?

FRANKLIN

Thank you.

ZORA

I love you.

FRANKLIN

I love you.

ZORA

No you do/n't.

Franklin is gone. Zora is alone.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 4

The Gospel Choir enters and moves the chaise lounges off stage. They bring on a dining room table and chairs. They move to the side of the pool once they are done.

Max, Bellamy, Franklin, Alessia and Andre are sitting at a dining table that is now there in place of the chaise lounges beneath a banner that reads: " ANDRE + FRANKLIN"

The table settings are immaculate with colorful cakes and treats sprinkled upon white linen.

Franklin and Andre sit at the heads of the table, Franklin sucking his thumb.

Zora sits in the middle of the table wearing a long black dress, she has had three glass of champagne. On one side sits Bellamy and Max talking to Andre, on the other is Alessia, talking to Franklin. Zora is silently tipsy.

ALESSIA

They love that you've gone macro darling.
Love it.
They really
really do.
Now we just have to figure out how you want to package it.
Any ideas?

She makes a large gesture with her hands.

FRANKLIN

...

ALESSIA

I know
I know.
Today is not a day for work.
It's just--
it's
Really beautiful.
Really challenging work Franklin.

Bellamy is showing Andre and Max something on her phone.

BELLAMY

I'm so happy I didn't wear this...
I mean.
Right?
I look horrible.
Geoff thought I looked fine
but
you can't argue with a well shot selfsnap you know?

ANDRE

Who's Geoff?

BELLAMY
Geoff.

MAX
Some new guy.

Andre looks over at Zora who is still looking out, disinterested.

ANDRE
Should we get started?

He reaches for a glass of champagne. Zora looks at him pointedly.

ZORA
What are you doing?

ANDRE
I was just going to get the speeches started.

ZORA
Hm...

Zora looks over to Franklin who continues to suck on his thumb. He makes a face. He slumps down into his seat. Zora turns to Max who is clinking his knife into his glass.

MAX
Well I guess since
I would like,
be best man if this were like a normal
whatever
...
I'm best man so I should say my speech first.

Bellamy and Alessia laugh.

MAX
I--
yeah.
Like...

This whole thing has been like,
a mind fuck to me.
...
...
It's cool though, I mean...
(he turns to Andre)
Ok, so like,
Franklin and I have been--
he's been my best friend since like
he first moved to LA.
...
...
He was working, uh
at this like
art gallery?
In Santa Monica.
And his boss would
like
he was like this gross straight dude.
And he would like
pull his dick out at parties and like
would hang out with porn stars
and I'm sure he was a criminal
or something
because I don't think any art was ever
like
nothing was sold before Franklin got there.
So I don't know how the lights stayed on but...
Like, I would go to Jacob's,
this dude,
I would go to his parties a lot,
because they were good
and the art on the walls was always the same
for three years straight
the same
But then
like one day Franklin was there
and he was like,
"This dude right here?
He's gonna make me rich."
And then he like offered me G and walked away.
And like,
literally,

I only ever went to his,
like
I only went to those parties because,
like,
that was my scene
or whatever
but like
then,
Franklin was like:
“Wanna see some new stuff?”
And he took me into this massive room
that was filled with these toys
it looked like
toys...
And it was the first time I saw that art could be this
like game, this fun game or something?
And like
that this dude was fucking fun.
And he wanted to have fun with me?
But I was also confused
because
it didn’t make sense to me.
Why...
Like why he would choose, if he was so
like
if he was so talented why he would choose to share his fun
his like spark, or whatever
with this gross straight dude.
Was it money?
Was it like, power?
Were they fucking?
And like, I never asked but
I started asking him to hang out a lot more...
And--
yeah I guess...
Maybe that’s why.
I don’t know anyway.
Here’s to more fun.
Years of it.
More fun.

Andre stares at him. Max stares back and takes a drink. Everyone claps except Zora.

ANDRE

Thank you Max.

BELLAMY

Max...
That was, like,
What the fuck?
You never told me that.

MAX

Yes I have.

BELLAMY

...

(to Franklin)

I must've forgot that you used to work for Jacob.

ANDRE

(to Franklin)

Franklin?

Zora's done. She can't anymore. She stands up raising her glass.

ZORA

If you all will indulge me for a moment...
I...
yeah I just can't go on without us at least attempting to bless this union.
Since no one wanted to go to a church.
Call a pastor,
we should wait a second.
Do this proper.
So everybody, *
just
if you don't mind....
lower your heads.

(they do, Andre taking a breath)

Dear Heavenly Father
thank you for bringing all of us here today
to celebrate you.
To bask in your glory
and commune with each other as
Franklin and Andre attempt to make some semblance of a life together.

Zora opens her eyes and looks at Andre who never closed his.

The Gospel Choir begins to march towards the table vocalizing and harmonizing as Zora opens and closes her mouth in slow motion, emphatically speaking as no words come out.

ANDRE

That was interesting Zora...
very interesting.

(to Franklin)

Please take you thumb out of your mouth and say something Franklin.
Did you not hear her?
Are you not listening?

Franklin looks up and as he pulls his thumb out his mouth he once again sees into our reality. He looks over and sees Zora speaking but can't hear or understand her because in our reality we can't hear or understand her.

Alessia and Bellamy begin to stand, frightened.

ANDRE

Alright, well if you're not going to do anything at all then I guess I will.

Franklin keeps looking out and fear moves through his body and into his eyes. He loses all the color a black boy can lose. He looks back to his mother and starts to cry and tries to say something but nothing comes out.

Franklin looks at the audience and collapses in on himself. Suddenly he's back and having a panic attack. With a deep inhalation as though he had been underwarter he reaches out toward Andre.

FRANKLIN

Daddy
I--
I can't
breath.
Daddy
help me.

ZORA
(still mouthing wordlessly) *

The Gospel Choir hits their height as they reach * the table and immediately stop singing. Zora * looks over to Franklin back in his reality. *

FRANKLIN

/ Daddy.
I
Daddy.
I'm scared.

ZORA

Baby.
Look at me.

Franklin keeps holding on to Andre for dear life. Zora walks over and lays her hands on his shoulders and closes her eyes.

Slowly the panic begins to leave Franklin and the color starts returning to his face, he loosens his grip on Andre.

ANDRE

That's right.
Inhale,
Exhale.
Inhale. /
Exhale.

Zora takes her hands off Franklin's shoulders.

ZORA

Stop talking to him.

Andre looks up, angry.

ANDRE
I told you to go.

No one moves, caught in the middle of a tornado.

ZORA
I said. Stop talking to him.

ANDRE
(on the verge of tears)
Listen.
I've tried, but since you've arrived you've been horrible to me.
Horrible.
This is my day, our day and you can't / put

BELLAMY
Franklin, do you need some water or something?

Franklin, dazed, says nothing.

ANDRE
What have I done, Zora?
I bought you an Hermes.
I'm-
We are family now.
Whether you like that or not.
And I've done nothing wrong.

ZORA
Even when you're doing nothing you're doing it wrong.
(to Franklin)
Baby you need some water.
Max?

Max reaches over to hand a glass of water to Zora. Zora takes the glass and tries to hand it to Franklin. Franklin knocks it out of her hand.

FRANKLIN
NO!
Daddy, give me the water!
Daddy?

Andre picks up a glass of water and starts to hand it to Franklin. Zora knocks it out of his hand.

ZORA

No.
uh uh.
That's not what's happening right now.

Andre gets in Zora's face, irate now.

ANDRE

I'm just trying to help him Zora.
Why?
Why are you doing this?
That's all I / want to know.

Zora looks at Franklin with motherly disgust.

ZORA

Why?
That's my question too.
Why you so DEAD SET
on being
this boy's daddy?
Why?
Don't you see something done got inside of this boy's spirit?
That he's possessed?
He ain't been right / since the moment I stepped foot here.

ANDRE

Possessed? Zora you sound crazy.
(This--
I'm not--)
I don't know why Franklin
INSISTS on calling me his--

ZORA

BECAUSE YOU INSISTED
you done put some sort of
wickedness on my baby
and I'm gonna shed it.

(pause)

Zora looks at him and with an inhalation she's a preacher. The table her pulpit.

ZORA

You're ignorant!
Let me tell you something:
To father a black child
is to see the majesty of your
seed's promise
erased with his first breath.
The moment
you see his melanin crystallize
you see him die.
Why do you think so many of them leave?
The daddies?
It's not conditioning.
It ain't slavery.
That don't make much sense once you really dig down deep into it.
It's the realization that
even their male-ness
can't brighten up
the utter darkness
of their child's future.
The only reason the mother's stay
is because
we're prepared.
We've
been promised darkness since the day
we looked down and saw blood looming
black and scarlet
in the lining of our
lil two dollar panties.

Zora gets up and walks over to Franklin. Out of her purse she pulls a pocket bible and places it on his forehead. She stares down Andre the whole time.

Bellamy, Alessia and Max sit rapt. Franklin is still dazed but looks alive immediately once his mother starts to speak.

ZORA

The Lord said...
in Ephesians,
Chapter 6
Verse 10
I believe...
“Finally,
be strong in the Lord
and in the strength of his might.
Put on the whole armor of God,
that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.
For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood,
but against the rulers,
against the authorities,
against the cosmic powers over this present darkness,
against the spiritual forces of evil
in the heavenly places.”

ANDRE

Zora.
Look now,
This is silly.

Zora just looks at him. He gets up and starts to walk away before:

ZORA

I can’t think of a more heavenly place
than where I’m standing right now.

Franklin begins to make feral childlike noises falling in and out of lucidity. He moves in his chair.

ZORA

There it is.
Right there.

Andre steps to her, figuring something out.

ANDRE

This is sabotage. You’ve drugged him
something
you couldn’t handle him having this day with me.

You're sick.
You're a sick woman.
Leave.
Get out.
/
Go, before I ca--

ZORA

I will not.
Not without my son.
I
I've fought too hard for him all these years.
For it to...

Zora looks up. There is something moving in her spirit.

Franklin continues to make odd noises.

ZORA

Max,
grab his legs.
Bellamy help me with his arms.

ANDRE

What are you doing?

Alessia walks over and holds Andre back. Bellamy and Max start to clumsily lift up the babbling Franklin.

ZORA

Come on, all the way in the pool.
(to Andre)
I told you I'm not leaving without my baby.

Zora, Bellamy and Max wade into the pool with Franklin, and once they are in the middle she cradles him in her arm and plugs his nose.

ANDRE

Stop this, now!
/I'm going to call someone.

ZORA

In the name of the Father!

Zora looks towards the sky and begins to whisper something. She takes Franklin and pushes him deep into the water.

Everyone freezes. And before Franklin emerges from the water a little miracle happens. Maybe it snows for a moment in Bel Air.

Franklin comes up from the water and looks out at the audience. He pants, catching his breath looking at them.

Blackout.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 4

Max, Bellamy, and Andre are sitting at a dining table beneath a banner that reads: "FRANKLIN"

Franklin wearing the speedo and towel from the first scene walks back outside. He walks up to the table and grabs a glass. He has the confidence of an adult again.

He smiles at Zora. Zora doesn't react.

FRANKLIN
(He looks at his mother and wills her to speak, she doesn't:)

"You're so ugly."
That's what I used to think all the time
and not just because you told me I looked like him.
Because it was a fact.
The fact that you SAID I looked like him is what made it hurt even more.
Made me hate you even more mama.
Because you chose him.
Some ugly ass nigga
and you gave me his ugly.
Whatever that even looked like.

All I knew is that some part of his ugly looked like me.
You had said.
...
“You’re so ugly...”
...
...
...
I really hate him.
When I was little
I used to dream that Captain Planet would find him, tie him up and leave him somewhere horrible.

He looks out to us and says this directly to us, tears almost in his eyes:

FRANKLIN

Like my ultimate fantasy
Is to get as big as the artists Andre has on the walls here.
And then do a performance piece where I compel my audience to find my father
probably in some dilapidated city like
Detroit or Houston
or some other generally horrible place
and then this audience will make an almost snuff film
of them like torturing my dad.
Or paint some great, grand painting,
and like, after my death some art restorer
with digital imaging software will see that there’s another painting beneath it
and like,
that painting has detailed instructions on how and where they can find my father’s body to exhume it and how to reanimate it so he can
mourn my passing and his newfound loneliness in a dark future that’s been shaped by my work.
My ultimate fantasy is my father seeing my birth a thousand times over on repeat,
a video in my retrospective, and at the moment when he feels that inhalation of pride I’ve read a father is supposed to feel upon seeing his child kick his feet, I’ll stab him in the chest and watch him bleed.

He laughs. Bellamy and Max shift uncomfortably in their chairs unable to speak.

FRANKLIN

Mama,
mama what you think about that huh?
I’m listening.

After a moment, Zora stands up and grabs her purse.

ZORA

I think I've stayed too long baby.
That's what I think.

FRANKLIN

What?

ZORA

I think I spent too long thinking that just because I had you, you were mine.
And you were,
For a time...
but somewhere,
Somewhere along the way you became his
...
(this cuts her as she says it)
Weak.
Like him.
Like that moment when I told him about you.
How you were a blessing?
Weak.
I--
When I came here
I thought,
it was
(she gestures around)
I thought this was your shift.
What made you look at me like you hated me when I arrived.
But you've been hiding the him in you, somewhere in your spirit for so long...so deep in some hole that he must have just been wooed out in the sunshine unbeknownst to me back home.
I'm leaving baby.

FRANKLIN

What?

ZORA

You're on your own.

Zora begins to walk to the door.

FRANKLIN

But Mama. No
No--
It's not like that.
You helped me see that.

ZORA

You don't see nothing, baby.
If you saw past your nose you'd be running out of here behind me.
But you ain't going nowhere.

As Zora passes Andre and places a hand on his shoulder.

ZORA

I'm sorry I saw it wrong.
But you wanted him.
He's yours for now.
But know that little hole you think you found won't ever fit on you.
It'll always be too big.
Too wide.

Zora walks into the white room. Andre looks up and follows her through the glass door and whispers something in her ear before she exits. She looks up and whispers something to him. She leaves.

Max stands up and grabs Bellamy.

MAX
(to Bellamy)

Let's go with Zora.

BELLAMY

I want to see what else he has to say.

FRANKLIN

You don't have to leave Max.

MAX
(ignoring Franklin)

Bellamy I'm leaving.
You should too.

Max exits. Bellamy looks after him and the back to Franklin.

BELLAMY
(to Franklin)
I get it.
I--
I hurt a lot too.

She walks over and kisses Franklin. Then exits.

Franklin stands in his speedo and looks into the white room where Andre is standing and looking at the faceless white sculpture Franklin made.

FRANKLIN
So I guess it's just me and you.
That's what we want though, right?

ANDRE
You didn't give me a face.

FRANKLIN
...
It was hard for me to remember
what it, like
looked like?
In the light.

ANDRE
You didn't give me a face.

FRANKLIN
I just/ wanted

ANDRE
You knew the minute we met
that if you could get me, have me,
if I would have you,
that I would become worthless in your arms, didn't you?
That's why--
that's why you said.
Because you knew
you could carry my weight and toss it aside,
and rummage through what was left when it was all over, right?

She's right.

(a realization)

I would never fit.
Can never.

FRANKLIN

What if that's true?

ANDRE

Are you not going to say?

Franklin looks back at him. As he's about to open his mouth a phone begins to ring.

ANDRE

Answer it.

A ring echoes throughout the theatre again.

FRANKLIN

No.

Andre walks over and picks it up.

ANDRE
(handing it to him)

Answer it.
...
It's him.
She told me it would be.
Answer it.

Franklin shakes his head no.

Andre looks at him as the phone continues to ring. He takes a breath and exits. The phone continues to ring.

Franklin looks out at us and begins to slowly dance to the rhythm of the now cacophonous chorus of rings surrounding us. A slow, painful solo that moves like a serpent through his body.

FRANKLIN
(he sings some and speaks some...let him find it)

That's all you wanted.
Someone special someone sacred,
in your life...
For just one moment.
To be warm naked.
At your side /
Sometimes I feel like you'll never understand me.

BEEP!

FRANKLIN

Hi, you've reached Franklin.
Sorry I uh,
I can't get to the phone right now.
But if you need anything just leave a message
Or, like, send me an email
or a text
and I'll get back to you at my earliest convenience.
Um...
Thank you...

BEEP!

The chorus of ringtones continues as the lights from the still boiling pool begin to blaze with intensity until all is blinding downstage, Franklin a black figure awash in white.

FRANKLIN

I will be your father figure,
put your tiny hand in mine
I will be your preacher teacher anything you had in mind, baby!

The song continues until we can take it no longer then:

END OF PLAY